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## **Heian Period Developments in Japanese Esoteric Buddhist Practice: The Case of the Fugen Enmei Ritual and its Various *Honzons***

### **Abstract**

The present paper addresses esoteric Buddhist rituals in Japan, with special focus on the changes that happened in its practice in the first couple of centuries after its initial arrival to the country. Although esotericism originated in India, it was the brief spotlight it gained in China during the Tang Dynasty (especially in the 8<sup>th</sup> century) that determined its transmission to Japan in the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, where it spread rapidly and reached a particular culmination within the same time period, i.e., the Heian Period (794 to 1185/1192). On the one hand, the Shingon school, established by the monk Kūkai (774-835), was essentially the first time the esoteric Buddhist teachings were systematised, and although the founder's person and teachings are still very much revered to this day, changes have begun right after his death in 835. On the other hand, the Tendai school, a rival for imperial recognition and support and also established (or rather introduced) in the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century by the monk Saichō (767-822, a contemporary of Kūkai) included some esoteric teachings, and with the practices introduced by later Tendai monks, such as Ennin (794-864) or Enchin (814-891), this school cultivated esoteric practices that are still extant in Japan today.

Firstly, the meaning and usage of the *honzon* (an icon of a deity) in esoteric Buddhist rituals is clarified in the paper, while later the evolution of two specific icons that were used during the Fugen Enmei rituals of both the Shingon and Tendai schools is introduced, with explanations as to why there are two different types of iconographies extant for the same kind of ritual. The paper contributes to the study of those esoteric practices that were created and developed in a locally recognized Buddhist milieu that served specific purposes in Japan and are found in no other Buddhist cultures in Asia.

**Keywords:** Esotericism; Esoteric Buddhism; Japanese Buddhism; Fugen Bosatsu; Fugen Enmei; Samantabhadra; Honzon; Buddhist Ritual; Heian Period

The Fugen Enmei ritual (Fugen Enmei hō 普賢延命法)<sup>1</sup> is only preserved in Japan, and from the Japanese sources it can be assessed that it is a Japanese development in the changing era of the middle Heian period (mid 10<sup>th</sup> to mid 11<sup>th</sup> centuries), when the newly established power of the retired emperors (*insei* 院政) brought about several developments in the esoteric traditions as well. For example, through the *monzeki* 門跡 system of the cloistered prince-monks (*hosshinnō* 法親王), the imperial family became interwoven with the esoteric Buddhist traditions and temples. The Fugen Enmei ritual with Fugen Enmei Bodhisattva as its principal deity of worship,<sup>2</sup> emerged in such changing circumstances and became a major ritual for the imperial family and other powerful people, such as shoguns.

We cannot discuss this subject, however, without clarifying the primary concept by first asking: what is a *honzon* 本尊, and what does it mean in the esoteric Buddhist context? It is a frequently used word, yet scholars do not elaborate on its diverse meanings, especially in the light of how many denominations in Japan use various objects as *honzon*. This neglect was already pointed out by Robert Sharf.<sup>3</sup> He and other scholars argue that the Buddhist icons that we

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<sup>1</sup> There are different variations for longevity rituals with the name ‘*enmei*’ in the sources. Other than the Fugen Enmei ritual, there is also a ritual called the Enmei ritual (Enmei hō 延命法). Both the Enmei and Fugen Enmei rituals are performed for the prolongation of life. In this function, these two are regarded as one and the same by monks, scholars, and Buddhist dictionaries. Nonetheless, they are generally distinguished today by the number of ritual spheres (or altars) and assistant monks (*bansō* 伴僧), and also by their principal images. Therefore, the Enmei ritual is usually referred to as a common (*futsūhō* 普通法) or minor ritual (*shōhō* 小法), but the Fugen Enmei ritual is designated as one of the major rituals (*daihō* 大法).

In the Mochizuki dictionary of Buddhism, the two rituals are told apart as follows:

*‘There is actually two kinds to this ritual: one is simply called Enmeihō, it is one of the six kinds of rituals (roku shu hō 六種法). It is performed as a common ritual, with Enmei deity, in other words, a two-armed Kongōsatta, as its honzon. The other one is called Fugen Enmeihō, and it is performed as a major ritual. In this case, the honzon is a twenty-armed Fugen Enmei deity, the altars of the Shitennō is set up separately, forty-nine lamp are lit, skeletal grass is used at the homa altar, and twenty assistant monks are necessary.’* (Mochizuki *bukkyō daijiten* vol. 1: 323)

Ueda Reijō sums up that the Enmei, the Fugen Enmei and the Jūmyō kyō rituals (壽命經法) are to pray for benefits and long life (*zōyaku* 增益 and *enmei* 延命/*enju* 延寿), and he distinguishes three lesser differences:

1. performing the Enmei hō does not include *sūtra*-reading, while performing the other two does;
2. the Fugen Enmei hō is a major ritual, while the other two are designated only as small scale ceremonies, and
3. the *honzon* of the Enmei hō is the two-armed Enmei bosatsu, but that of the Fugen Enmei hō is the 20-armed Fugen Enmei bosatsu, while the *honzon* of the Jūmyō kyō ritual can be a two- or a 20-armed Fugen Enmei bosatsu (Ueda 1989: 496–497).

<sup>2</sup> For more about this bodhisattva, its origins and iconography, see Kiss 2014, Kiss 2019, and Kiss 2021.

<sup>3</sup> Sharf – Sharf 2001: 3.

encounter today as artworks were considered as living presences and were pervaded with significant ‘apotropaic and salvific power’.<sup>4</sup> It seems, however, that not just Western but also Japanese scholars overlook the need to clarify the meaning of the *honzon* as well. In most cases, the term is used to refer to icons in a ritual context and is translated as ‘principal deity’ or ‘main object of veneration’.<sup>5</sup> It is not so simple, however, to characterise the term. Goepper argues that *honzens* are the condensed and visible forms of various religious ideas.<sup>6</sup> The *Mikkyō daijiten* 密教大辞典 (1969) lists three meanings:

1. a buddha or bodhisattva to whom the worshipper offers veneration, or for whom they perform the rituals;
2. the central figure (*chūzon* 中尊) of a configuration and
3. a main object of a temple or a hall, to whom that building is dedicated.<sup>7</sup>

The source for the concept or form of the *honzon* is a brief description in the Mahāvairocāna scripture (*Da piluzhe’na chenfo shenbian jiachi jing* 大毘盧遮那成佛神變加持經, T19.848), translated by the Indian master Śubhākarasiṃha (637–735) and his Chinese disciple Yixing 一行 (683–727). It is further discussed in the first (and only) commentary on this scripture, the *Commentary on the Sūtra in which Mahāvairocāna Becomes a Buddha (Da Piluzhe’na chenfo jingshu* 大毘盧遮那成佛經疏, T39.1796) by Yixing. In the explanation of Chapter 28 of Fascicle 6, *The Exposition of Deity Samādhi (Shuo benzun sanmeipi* 說本尊三昧品), it is stated that there are three categories of the deities’ bodies: syllable (*ji* 字, *akṣara*), seal (*in* 印, *mudrā*) and physical representation (*gyōzō* 形象, *rūpa*). Regarding the latter two, it is the impure body that has physical characteristics, such as the manifest body and colours.<sup>8</sup>

### The Origins of the Fugen Enmei Ritual

According to the surviving lists of the 9<sup>th</sup> century Japanese monks who went to study in Tang China, the scripture called *Sūtra of the Most Excellent Adamantine Dhāraṇī of Samantabhadra of Long Life, Empowered by the Light of all the Tathāgatas, Preached by the Buddha (Bussetsu issai sho nyorai shin kōmyō kaji Samantabhadra enmei kongō saishō darani kyō* 佛說一切諸如來心光明加持普賢菩薩延命金剛最勝陀羅尼經 [abbreviated as the *Fugen Enmei*

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 8.

<sup>5</sup> Goepper 1979: 245.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> *Mikkyō daijiten* vol. 5: 2068.

<sup>8</sup> T 19.0848: 44a16–20. 「諸尊有三種身。所謂字印形像。彼字有二種。謂聲及菩提心。印有二種。所謂有形無形。本尊之身亦有二種。所謂清淨非清淨。彼證淨身離一切相。非淨有想之身。則有顯形衆色。」

*sūtra*], was brought to Japan first by two Shingon monks: Eun 惠運 (798–869) in 847<sup>9</sup> and then Shūei 宗叡 (809–884) in 865.<sup>10</sup> An image of Fugen Enmei Bodhisattva arrived a couple of years earlier, as part of the imported treasures of the Tendai monk Ennin 円仁 (794–864).<sup>11</sup> These events are the indirect bases for the appearance of the Fugen Enmei ritual in Japan. From the ‘imports’ we could surmise a Chinese origin for the ritual. However, a ritual with this name is missing from all sources between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries, which prevents us from making such a declaration. It was only from the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century that the Fugen Enmei rituals began to be documented in Shingon and Tendai temple sources, such as records or liturgy anthologies.

Although there were mentions of an Enmei ritual in earlier centuries, we know very little of this ritual. The sources never mention anything about how it was performed or what kind of *honzon* was installed for the ceremony. This late entry on the Japanese esoteric Buddhist stage, the variations in the title of the prayer and the number of days of the rituals make the origins of this rite highly obscure. Uekawa Michio 上川通夫 epitomises three ways of how a ritual could have appeared in Japan: by means of import, by surfacing many years after the import and by Japanese production.<sup>12</sup> He mentions these in his study of the origins of the Nyohō sonshō hō 如法尊勝法, which is another ritual where coincidentally the Fugen Enmei image was used. He suspects that the ritual was produced in Japan. We find many corresponding facts when reading this case (such as the ones listed above), which also points to the third kind of appearance in the case of the Fugen Enmei ritual as well, which first appears in the sources in 1075. We can assess that the several accounts of an Enmei ritual without any kind of description may have differed from this one. This is due to two facts. Firstly, the monks used different names for the rituals, which clearly

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<sup>9</sup> *Eun zenshi shōrai kyōhō mokuroku* 惠運禪師将来教法目錄 (T 55.2168A: 1087c4–1089a16). 最勝延命經一卷 (1087c22). *Eun risshi sho mokuroku* 惠運律師書目錄 (T 55.2168B: 1089a19–1092a8). 佛說一切(諸)如來心光明加持普賢菩薩延命金剛最勝陀羅尼經一卷 大廣智不空譯 (1089a29–b01).

<sup>10</sup> *Shin shosha shōrai hōmon tō mokuroku* 新書寫請來法門等目錄 (T 55.2174A: 1108a7–1111c6). 一切如來心光明加持普賢菩薩延命陀羅尼經一卷 不空三藏譯此同先請壽命(經)同本異譯也 四紙; 普賢菩薩延命金剛最勝陀羅尼經一卷 不空三藏譯 (異譯也) 四紙 (1108b06–09).

<sup>11</sup> It is intriguing that Ennin seems to never have been acquainted with the scripture of Fugen Enmei, only the image, for the text is not listed in any of his catalogues of imported Buddhist treasures. It can be, however, that he lost a supposed copy during the upheavals of the great anti-Buddhist persecution of 845, during which he was still in China. Another possible explanation can be that the text itself may not have been written when he was there in 840. However, I think the previous explanation might be more plausible than assuming that the text was written (down) sometime in the years between 840 and 847.

<sup>12</sup> Uekawa 2008: 76.

means that they were differentiated between. Secondly, only this newly held ritual was described at length and in detail, and also they emphasised the fact that it was performed for the first time.<sup>13</sup> The complex ritualistic system of the Fugen Enmei hō (or as sometimes called in the Taimitsu tradition, the Nyohō Enmei hō 如法延命法), recorded in the *Kakuzenshō* 覺禪鈔 (Tōmitsu tradition) or *Asabashō* 阿娑縛抄 (Taimitsu tradition), seems to be a later development from around the same time that some other esoteric rites appeared in Japan.

The Enmei and Fugen Enmei rituals are discussed in some early Tendai commentaries, such as the *Shijū jōketsu* 四十帖決 of Chōen 長宴 (1016–1081),<sup>14</sup> but mostly focus on the philosophical background of the bodhisattva and its scriptures. Later, after the Fugen Enmei ritual becomes one of the four major Tendai rituals and is performed often, we find numerous descriptions of rituals where the leading monk was that of a Tendai affiliation.

### Various Functions of the Ritual

It is noticeable that the majority of the sources concerning Fugen Enmei are about the ritual. Apart from the many longer ritual journals (*nikki* 日記), we find a lot of shorter inscriptions, which give the date, time and place, and also the cause, the name or rank of the people benefitting from the prayer; sometimes the name of the performing *ācārya* (*ajari* 阿闍梨) or the number of assistant monks is described too. Looking at these aspects, we can assess the following points:

- 1) the date depends on the cause (whenever the prayer is needed);
- 2) the time varies and the length of the prayers also differ (one to 21 days);
- 3) the places are either one of the palaces or temples of the Heian capital (Kyoto);
- 4) all of the above rituals were performed when a high-ranking person was indisposed, sick or giving birth;
- 5) the leading monk is very high-ranking in the religious hierarchy and on many occasions is a head of a temple or a tradition (*zasu* 座主) and
- 6) the number of assistant monks also varies slightly (on most occasions there are 20).

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<sup>13</sup> This is recorded in the *Fugen Enmei hō nikki* 普賢延命法日記. The record says: 承保二年十月九日。法性寺座主(覺尋) 蒙二綸旨一。於二賀陽院內裏一。二十口伴僧一。被レ始二修普賢延命法一矣。‘On the 9<sup>th</sup> day of the 10<sup>th</sup> month in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of Jōhō [1075], the chief abbot of the Hosshōji temple received a private message from the Emperor. At the Kayanoin palace, with twenty assistant monks, the Fugen Enmei ritual was performed for the first time’. In: *Asabashō*, 220<sup>th</sup> fascicles, TZ 9: 864a7–9.

<sup>14</sup> T 75.2408: 825a2-960b25.

Various kinds of sources attest to these points: in addition to the comprehensive ritual journals, the liturgy compilations, the diaries of high-ranking officials (mostly of the Fujiwara- or Kujō-families) and the almanacs of monks or temples must be mentioned here.

The most common function of the ritual was to cure the ill. Many sources mention that when a member of a high-class family, or a shogun, became indisposed, which is usually expressed with the terms *gonō* 御悩, or *fuyo* 不豫, they turned to the Fugen Enmei ritual. On these occasions, there could be two kinds of activities: they either held a ritual or consecrated some Buddhist images. For example, in 1153, a hundred drawings of Enmei and a thousand fascicles of the *Jumyō kyō* were consecrated at the Toba palace, because the cloistered-retired Emperor Toba 鳥羽天皇 (1103–1156; r. 1107–1123) was suffering from ‘not eating’ (御悩不食).<sup>15</sup> One of the most famous and thoroughly recorded rituals was performed when the first Tokugawa shogun, Tokugawa Ieyasu 徳川家康 (1543–1616), fell ill at the beginning of 1616.<sup>16</sup>

Since the function of the Enmei and Fugen Enmei rituals are the same, it is not wrong to think that the latter developed out of the former, with the assistance of the Japanese esoteric monks. As time passed, the range of the functions and application methods also widened.

Of the other functions, imperial pregnancies and childbirths must be mentioned. A series of esoteric rituals was performed in a short period of time for such occasions, which is another piece of evidence that shows not only how significant it was to preserve the imperial bloodline, but also how close the association was between the esoteric traditions and the imperial family. As official records, many *mokurokus* of the rituals during that time are preserved, especially in the monumental *Collection of Historical Documents* (*Gunsho ruijū* 群書類従), including the *List of Prayers for Delivery* (*Osan oinori mokurku* 御産御祈目録) and the *Assorted Accounts of Deliveries* (*Osan buruiki* 御産部類記). As Anna Andreeva points out in her recent study of Heian childbirth customs among the aristocrats, the room where the imperial consorts gave birth had to be ritually secured by all possible means, which meant that the high-ranking monks and cloistered prince-monks of imperially designated temples (*monzeki*)

<sup>15</sup> *Tennō kōzoku jitsuroku*, vol. 39: 1110.

<sup>16</sup> In the *Dai Nihon shiryō* there are seven separate sources cited related to this event, starting with a lengthy and detailed entry in Gien’s journal, the *Gien jugō nikki* 義演准后日記. Then it is also described in the *Sanbōin monjo* 三寶院文書, or the *Honkō kokushi nikki* 本光国史日記. Also, the *honzon* painting used for this ritual is in the Daigoji temple and has an inscription on the back. Although we do not know when the inscription was made, it records some circumstances of the ritual. It also states that the painting was an older one restored specifically for this ritual. In previous centuries, a new painting was made usually before the ritual, so the restoration may indicate the hastiness to perform the ritual.

were also invited into the household.<sup>17</sup> Their role was naturally to pray for the safe delivery of the imperial consort and for the child to be a male heir.<sup>18</sup> The Enmei and Fugen Enmei rituals were regularly carried out. The Enmei ritual is much more often listed than the other one, but both were usually led by the Tōmitsu (mostly Ninnaji) and Taimitsu (mainly Shōren'in) *monzeki* monks. As one example, in 1103 (Kōwa 5) there were two mentions of such rituals, on the 29<sup>th</sup> day of the 1<sup>st</sup> month, when in the Takamatsu shindono 高松寝殿 palace many Buddhist altars were built and images were consecrated for the newly born Prince Munehito 皇子宗仁親王, the future Emperor Toba.<sup>19</sup>

### The First Rituals and The Tōmitsu – Taimitsu Context

The first ever recorded Fugen Enmei ritual is described in the 220<sup>th</sup> fascicle of the *Asabashō*, the monumental work of the Tendai monk Shōchō 承澄 (1205–1282), which is called the *Journal of the Fugen Enmei Ritual* (*Fugen Enmeihō nikki* 普賢延命法日記). The ritual was conducted by the Tendai *zasu* Kakuji 覚尋 (1012–1081) in 1075 for Emperor Shirakawa 白河天皇 (1053–1129; r. 1073–1087):

承保二年十月九日。法性寺座主（覚尋）蒙二綸旨一。於二賀陽院內裏一。二十口伴僧一。被レ始二修普賢延命法一矣。<sup>20</sup>

On the 9<sup>th</sup> day of the 10<sup>th</sup> month in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of Jōhō [1075], the chief abbot of the Hosshōji temple received a private message from the emperor. At the Kayanoin palace,<sup>21</sup> with 20 assistant monks, the Fugen Enmei ritual was performed for the first time.

<sup>17</sup> Andreeva 2014: 363.

<sup>18</sup> Matsumoto 2008: 85.

<sup>19</sup> Two sources comment on the event: the journal of the statesman Fujiwara no Munetada 藤原宗忠 (1062–1141), the *Chūyūki* 中右記 (covering the events of the years between 1087 and 1138), and the *Gosan buruiki* 御産部類記 (*Assorted Accounts of Deliveries*). According to the former, the rituals continued to be performed for the new-born crown prince in the next month as well, and the prayers were for the retired emperor Shirakawa and the prince: 康和五年正月廿九日己酉、今日上皇皇子御祈、於高松寝殿被始修 [...] 白壇普賢延命。The latter records that they also started to make 11 buddhist images as well: 廿九日 [康和五年正月] 己酉、今日若宮御祈自院被行之、御佛十一軀被造始、於寝殿被始行五壇御修法 [...].

<sup>20</sup> *Asabashō*. TZ 9: 864a7–9.

<sup>21</sup> The Kayanoin palace (賀陽院 or 高陽院), built by the powerful statesman Fujiwara no Yorimichi 藤原頼通 (992–1074), in the first half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, was the location of many Fugen Enmei rituals.

This ritual was held for seven days, and the ending ceremony (*kechigan* 結願) was on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the same month.<sup>22</sup> We also get the layout of the altars of almost every ritual that is recorded in this volume of the *Asabashō*. We also gain crucial information about the process of the ritual, including the *honzon*s. It seems that it was common in the Taimitsu tradition that the image of Fugen Enmei Bodhisattva was hung (or placed) separately from those of the four Shitennō deities. All these images were consecrated (*kaigen kuyō* 開眼供養) during the opening ceremony (*kaibyaku* or *kaihaku*, *kaihyaku* 開白, or as sometimes also called *hyōbyaku* 表白).

The *Kakuzenshō* and the *Fugen Enmei mishuhōki* 普賢延命御修法記 of the Sanbōin 三宝院 hall of the Daigoji temple 醍醐寺 in Kyoto, both of the Tōmitsu tradition, list almost the same first couple of occasions, beginning with the first Taimitsu rituals and ending with some rituals with Shingon *ācāryas*. On the one hand, this shows that the Japanese beginnings were acknowledged by the monks of both esoteric traditions. Also, it becomes clear that those beginnings were initiated by the Taimitsu tradition. According to the *Shingon shū nenpyō* 真言宗年表, the earliest record of a Fugen Enmei hō is from 1099, and that first instance was conducted by Kakugyō 覺行 (1075–1105), the first monk to become cloistered-prince in the *insei* period.<sup>23</sup> A couple of years earlier, in 1087, there was mention of an Enmei hō, performed by a Shingon monk called Jōken 定賢 (?–?, active in the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century), so we see that the Shingon monks also acknowledged the difference between the two rituals.

Unfortunately, the Tōmitsu sources do not include the plans of the rituals, and the *honzon* descriptions are not common either. Of the few that are available, however, some clear patterns emerge. So now, let us see the patterns.

### The Question of the *Honzon*

The ritual space of the Taimitsu Fugen Enmei hō seems consistent no matter where the ritual was performed, whether a palace or a temple hall. This ritual The four main altars, namely the main ritual sphere (*dai dan* 大壇), the fire rite (*homa*) ritual sphere (*goma dan* 護摩壇), the ritual sphere of the Twelve Deva Guardians (*Jūniten dan* 十二天壇) and the ritual sphere of Nandikeśvara (Shōten dan 聖天壇), are completed with the four smaller ritual spheres of the

<sup>22</sup> TZ 9: 864b1–2.

<sup>23</sup> SSN 1973: 143. 「康和元年六月廿三日、覺行法親王、白河法皇の奉爲に普賢延命法を修す」 ‘On the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of the 6<sup>th</sup> month in 1099 (Kōwa 1), Kakugyō cloistered-prince performed the Fugen Enmei ritual for the cloistered-retired Emperor Shirakawa’. The citation is from the *Omuro sōshō ki* 御室相承記.



Four Heavenly Guardians in the four corners of the ritual space. Thus the Fugen Enmei hō is an eight-altar ritual, not a classic four-altar esoteric rite. The set-up of these altars can be found in many ritual manuals, such as the *Kakuzenshō*, the *Asabashō* and the *Mon'yōki* 門葉記 (Figures 1–2).

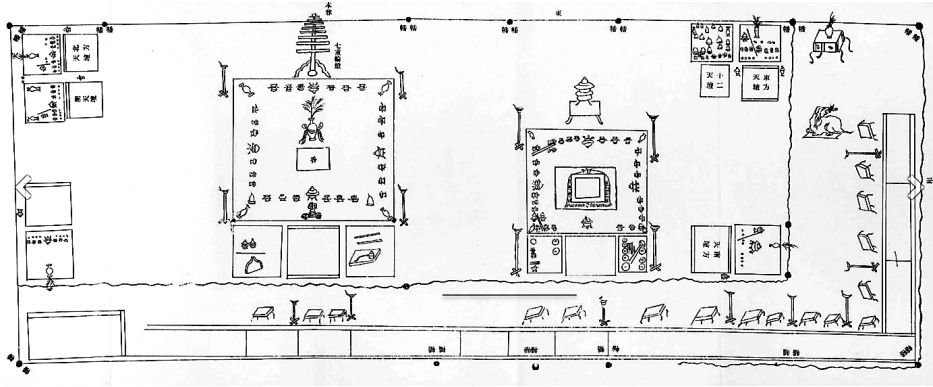


Figure 1. Ritual platform set-up for a Fugen Enmei hō.  
(Source: *Asabashō*, TZ 9: 134/135.)

Kakuzen remarks that the Nyohō Enmei hō is performed only in the Taimitsu tradition, and a so-called Enmei mandala is used as *honzon* along with four Shitennō images. This corresponds to the many Taimitsu ritual descriptions: the *Asabashō* and the later *Mon'yōki* list mainly the same kind of images and only a couple of times vary (on some occasions it is called 'Fugen Enmei mandala'). Most accounts also mention that this mandala image is in the Zentōin 前唐院 style. The Zentōin functions as the repository of the treasures brought to Japan by Ennin, which means that the Fugen Enmei image of Ennin was the prototype for the Taimitsu Fugen Enmei ritual.

Almost all recorded accounts mention this type of image. However, there are some atypical *honzon*s as well. In a ritual conducted by the 41<sup>st</sup> Tendai *zasu* Kensen 賢暹 in 1105 (Chōji 2), a painted image of a 20-armed bodhisattva sitting on four elephants was used, and there is no mention of the separate four Shitennō images.<sup>24</sup> However, then again, a two-armed bodhisattva statue is also mentioned, which means that on this occasion both types of the *honzon* were present at the ritual space.<sup>25</sup> The solution to this riddle may be found in Kakuzen's remark that on this occasion there were actually two conducting monks: Kensen of the Sanmon 山門 branch of the Taimitsu and a monk called Chōkaku 長覚 from the Miidera temple 三井寺 (Onjōji temple 園城寺), which belongs to the

<sup>24</sup> *Asabashō*. TZ 9: 871b29–c9.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

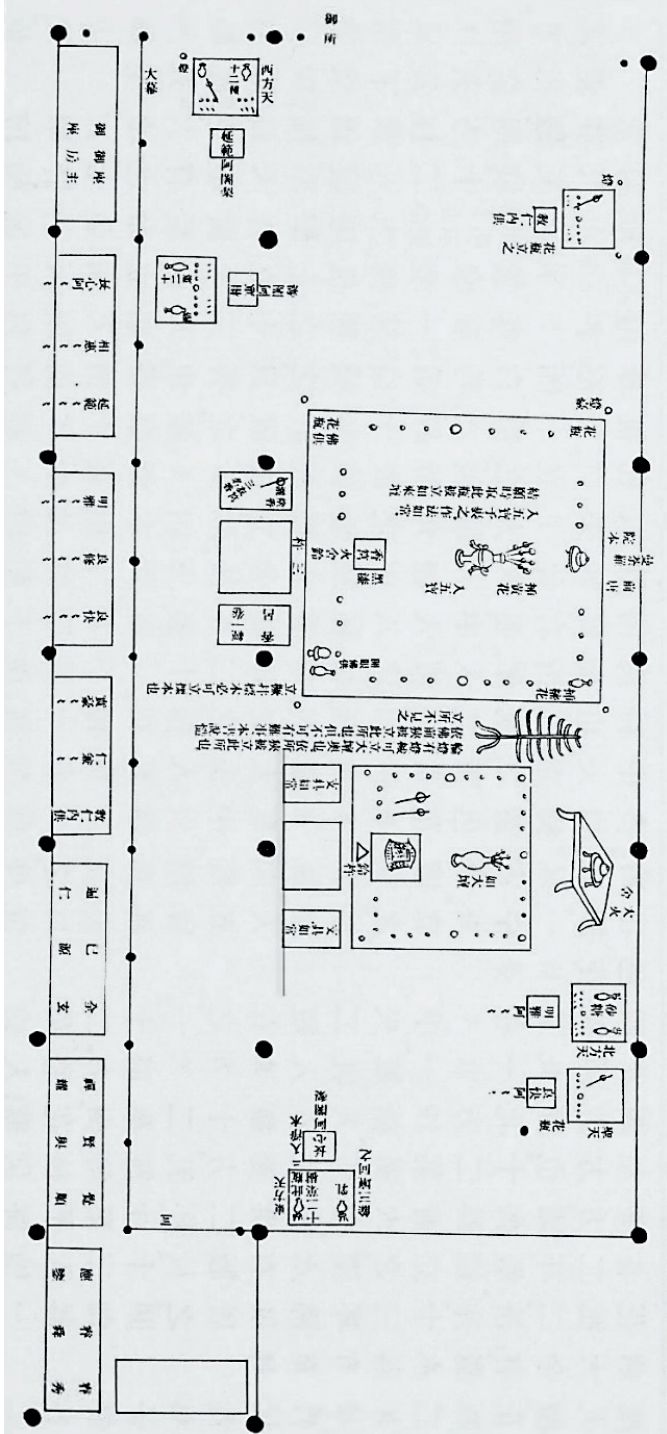


Figure 2. Gyōgen's 行玄 ritual platform set-up for a Fugen Enmei ritual in the Shirakawa Eastern Palace (白河東殿) in 1139.  
 (Source: Mon yōki, TZ. II : 632.)

Jimon 寺門 branch.<sup>26</sup> These traditions developed as different monks' teachings, namely that of Ennin (Sanmon) and Enchin 円珍 (814–891, Jimon). In other sources we find that one variation of the Fugen Enmei image was attributed to Enchin. However, it is not the 20-armed image, so even with the different traditions, the presence of this image is not clarified.

The Tōmitsu ritual had a different layout of altars, as can be seen in the drawing preserved in the Daigoji temple. Apart from the reversed order of the two major altars (the *dai dan* and the *goma dan*), one of the major changes is the missing Shitennō altars from the four corners, which makes this kind the usual four-altar esoteric rite. As I assess, this alteration is the result of using different *honzons*. The description of the ritual from 1133 in the *Kakuzenshō*, performed by the Shingon monk Genshin 儼信 (?–1157), lists a 20-armed *honzon* that was made in the style of the Jōganji temple 貞観寺 at Mt. Kōya.<sup>27</sup>

The question of why there were no Shitennō altars with the images of each deity can be answered by the different *honzon*. As the 20-armed bodhisattva sits on four great white elephants, the Four Heavenly Guardians are included in the principal image, each standing on one of the elephants' heads. Therefore, they do not need their own separate altars, like in the case of the two-armed mandala image, where the Shitennō are hardly ever depicted in one painting (the only exception is found in the Japanese collection of the Museum of Fine Art in Boston<sup>28</sup>). The three paintings in the Daigoji temple seem to corroborate this idea. There are three paintings referred to as Fugen Enmei that were used as *honzon* during the Fugen Enmei rituals, according to their inscriptions. One was made in the Kamakura period (1185/1192–1333/1336), it is designated as an important cultural property (*jūyō bunkazai* 重要文化財), and the other two are copies of this painting. All three have the 20-armed bodhisattva sitting on a lotus throne, supported by the four white elephants, and we see the four Shitennō deities on the elephants' heads.

## The Ritual Today

The Fugen Enmei hō is still being performed by Tendai monks. Every four years between April 4<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>, there is such a ritual in the Konponchūdō 根本中堂 at the Enryakuji temple on Mt. Hiei.<sup>29</sup> The four-year interval is due to the fact that

<sup>26</sup> *Kakuzenshō*. TZ 5: 103a21–23.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* 110a24–27.

<sup>28</sup> URL: <https://www.mfa.org/collections/object/fugen-enmei-the-bodhisattva-of-universal-virtue-who-prolongs-life-24538>.

<sup>29</sup> URL: <https://www.hieizan.or.jp/event/mishiho>.

there are four different kinds of major rituals (*dai hō*) that are performed one after another in successive years. The last Fugen Enmei ritual took place in 2021.<sup>30</sup>

It seems that the Fugen Enmei ritual was preserved in practice in the Taimitsu tradition. However, it does not necessarily mean that the ritual was forgotten by the Shingon school. The commentaries of Ueda Shōhen 上田照遍 (1828–1907) prove that they were still passed down even in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Shōhen, just like his master, Hōkan 宝肝 (d. u.), was a monk at the Enmeiji temple 延命寺 in Kawachi, Osaka. The collected work of his writings, the *Shōhen oshō zenshū* 照遍和尚全集, includes a *Secret Commentary on the Fugen Enmei ritual* (*Fugen Enmei hō hiki* 普賢延命法秘記).<sup>31</sup> This brief description includes the usual aspects of the ritual, the mantra, the mudrā and the *bīja* of Fugen Enmei, and it also touches upon the problem of the names and versions of the longevity rituals, namely the Jumyō kyō hō, the Enmei hō and Fugen Enmei hō. Shōhen concludes that the first two have the same *honzon* (the two-armed Enmei bosatsu) and are what can be called ‘minor’ rituals. He again tells us that the scripture translated by Vajrabodhi is read during the Jumyō kyō and Fugen Enmei rituals. Although he does not mention the name of the scripture, we can surmise from the next commentary that he thinks of the *Issai kyō*, which he analyses as a text translated by Vajrabodhi during the reign of the Tang Emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (685–762, r. 712–756). He does not write about actual performances of the ritual though.

### Conclusion

It seems that the Fugen Enmei ritual, like some other esoteric rituals, was developed by the Japanese monks of the middle Heian period. The first couple of occasions were performed by Tendai monks, but before long, Shingon monks also developed their own ritual. The monks of the two esoteric traditions knew about each other’s rituals, and liturgy anthologies of late Heian and Kamakura periods, such as the *Kakuzenshō* or the *Asabashō*, point out the common themes and the modifications as well.

As for the *honzon*, an image called the (Fugen) Enmei mandala was used for the Taimitsu Fugen Enmei rituals from the very beginning, and apart from some exceptions, we suspect that the two-armed bodhisattva image remained the principal image from almost the very beginning. The earliest surviving painting of the Daigoji temple of the 20-armed bodhisattva type may indicate that it was the principal image of the deity during the Tōmitsu rituals from probably very early on as well.

<sup>30</sup> The ritual was held for seven days from 4 April 2021.

<sup>31</sup> *Shōhen oshō zenshū* 照遍和尚全集 vol. 2.

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### List of figures

- Fig. 1: Ritual platform set-up for a Fugen Enmei hō. Asabashō, TZ 9: 134/135. <https://dzkims.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/SATi/images.php?vol=09>, p. 153 of 1053. In the public domain.
- Fig 2: Gyōgen's 行玄 ritual platform set-up for a Fugen Enmei ritual in the Shirakawa Eastern Palace (白河東殿) in 1139. Mon'yōki, TZ 11: 632. <https://dzkims.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/SATi/images.php?vol=11>, p. 642 of 1151. In the public domain.